

9/15/17

Despite a satellite speeding towards Saturn's surface and burning up from the intensity of the entry, we go about our day as Tillers. Students continue to collaborate with each other on their devices to think and problem-solve in preparation for life after Tustin High School. Who knows: maybe some of our current students will be part of teams that design additional space traveling devices sent out to collect data like Cassini has for the past 20 years, providing countless insights into its origin and connections to our own planet. Or maybe some of our students will go on to design innovative devices like the ones Apple announced this Tuesday. Our work to develop students for a rapidly changing world is not just a tag line. The headlines this week reminded me of both the urgency and relevance of our work.

The learning that occurs in the classroom is foundational, but another important aspect of our work is supporting and working with our parents to develop our school and students. We talk about partnering with parents for the good of our students, and I watched that transpire this week. On Monday morning, I had the privilege of meeting parents at our principal's coffee (scheduled monthly). This was our first such meeting and we used it as an opportunity to communicate background and discuss plans for addressing English language learners and the use of Title I resources. A small group of parents gathered in the library to listen to our presentation, but more importantly, I was able to make connections with some very kind people who want the best for their children.

Later in the day, we held our quarterly School Site Council Meeting in my conference room, which included teachers, staff, admin, parents, and even students. This is a formal structure which provides an opportunity to share our goals and vision for Tustin High School, and receive feedback on our progress. Jim Palmer, father of Sophie Palmer, graciously serves as the chair of this strategic group which provides another important connecting point with parents. The highlight of the meeting for me was listening to our student representatives, Drew Donahoo and Areeba Amin, articulate their thoughts about the direction of Tustin High School. Their poise and engagement was impressive. I suspect they had no idea as to the influence they brought to the conversation. It was obvious the adults in the room were focused on what our students had to offer.

Speaking of growth, I had the privilege of observing and engaging with two inspiring classrooms. Wandering near the back of our campus, I decided to pop into the band room to catch a glimpse of them at work. As I expected, they were intently working on a piece that they will perform tonight. However, as I looked more closely, I noted some interesting dynamics. Their director, Michael Fisk, asked the band to repeat four measures of the music several times. While the students played correct notes upon my arrival, I noticed that the teacher was focused on the exact phrasing and intonation of this particular section. His positive and energetic approach kept the experience fresh despite the constant repetition. The attention to detail was

something that improved the sound for the moment, and will serve our students well in life.

I also observed a young lady in the front sitting quietly on a stool recording information from the front of the classroom. It turns out that Liza Guzman is a drum major and was focused on identifying opportunities for growth. Our band grew this summer from about 30 students to 50 students, half of those being freshman. What they are accomplishing as a relatively young group is commendable. I look forward to watching them perform at halftime tonight, especially knowing how hard they are working to grow their musical and performing skills.

After visiting the band room, I moved a couple of doors down and checked out a ceramics class. I had heard about this dynamic class taught by Ysabel Gray, so I thought I would take a peek and see why more and more students have been signing up. It did not take long at all to see the reason. Students were intently creating pieces on the table space in front of them. Each creation was unique and seemed to represent the personality of the student at work. One young lady was engrossed in adding intricate details to a stunning representation of a tree. As I talked to her about her work, she communicated how learning to tap into her creative talents was a new experience for her. I am so grateful for these classroom experiences that provide an avenue for students to develop their creativity. Some might think of ceramics as a filler class in a high school schedule, but for these students it was obviously a highlight in their day and a chance for students to shine.

Being new to Tustin means that I get to engage in many new experiences, including College Night this past Wednesday. We had over 225 parents come to learn about college preparation, applications, and admittance. Representatives came from local universities, but the most significant contribution of the evening came from our incredible counseling team. I am sure they will be tired after today having not only invested fully to plan and deliver College Night, but they have also met with almost every senior in our school to touch base on the college process. Large tables have moved around our campus each day to create a temporary office outside classrooms. Students were brought one by one to converse face to face with their counselors. I am so grateful for a counseling team committed to this process. I also appreciate the willingness of the teachers to support this effort. It explains why college is so well attended by our graduating seniors.

As the principal of a thriving high school, I experience so much in a given day and am grateful for that gift. Yesterday was our first blood drive and I was again impressed with the wide participation of our students, staff, and parents. What may on the surface seem like a logistical intrusion on the school day, proved to be a significant community service and leadership opportunity. Several students shared about their desire to help others, including Jocelyn whose job was hand holding. Watching our students manage, organize, and conduct this large operation showed again how capable our students are to contribute and lead.

Speaking of quality leadership, our pool served as a fertile container for growing character in our students. Our water polo team jumped out to a huge 8 – 0 lead against their opponent. Obviously their hard work and solid coaching put them in a position to dominate the competition. However, the leadership training occurred when the coach was faced with such a lopsided score. Coach Brawley communicated to his athletes to win graciously and they responded accordingly. I watched our swimmers play hard, but pass on multiple opportunities to score. Understanding the classy approach to the competition caused me to ask questions about the coach, Kyle Brawly. I found out that he is a Tustin graduate brought in to coach by Steve Pickell. I had an opportunity to visit with Steve and quickly sensed his passion for developing not only a strong program, but character in his athletes. Coach Brawley embraced that posture yesterday and Tiller spectators noted his leadership. Because the other team couldn't field a JV team, the team ended the day with a scrimmage which included the coach and some female water polo players. It was a fun celebratory ending to a really good day in the pool.

I hope your weekend is great! Enjoy the cooler weather.

We are starting to really get into the meat of our work. I know it can be a grind at times because of how hard we work. However, we will continue to support one another and keep the “why” in mind. It is about growing our students and I am grateful to be a part of a team that continues to keep that in the forefront.

Go Tillers!

Jon